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OCTOBER
'09

A Hausa Bashaw

"There on the hot sands he awaited his enemy"

From "The Gateway to the Sahara."
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CENTRE OF VISION

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Word Painting

In writing of Stevenson, Bliss Perry says: "What an eye! What a hand! . . . Not an adjective that does not paint a picture. . . ."

Words are but pigments, flashes of color, scraps of action—to be mixed at the writer's will; laid on; backed away from and squinted at, artist-fashion; scraped off and mixed again. The strength and charm of a broad sweep, style, impressionism, atmosphere; these are as applicable to the pen as to the brush. What is a well-planned chapter but a good composition?

The following passages are from Charles W. Furlong's latest book, "The Gateway to the Sahara" (Scribner's), and our frontispiece was struck off by the same presses that did the work for his book. Not only are they valuable to the study of word pictures, but they afford an insight into the work of a graduate of this school. While he led us through the proof-sheets of his book, Mr. Furlong stated emphatically that he owed his power of graphic description and his success as a writer to his ability to paint and to his training at the Massachusetts Normal Art School.

The book is a brilliant account of the author's sojourn in Tripoli, and is not only an interesting record of the customs and habits of the people of the coast towns, but also covers the strange and picturesque life of oasis and desert.

Of the street scenes in the day time, Mr. Furlong writes:—

"Through these narrow, fascinating streets of Tripoli her 30,000 inhabitants go to their tasks and pleasures. Between series of arches, which serve the double purpose of re-enforcing the walls and giving shade, awnings are stretched here and there. Under these and in little booths all the industries necessary to the subsistence of the town are carried on.

"At every hand one seems to be enclosed by one or two-storied houses, whose bare walls, with few windows and heavily-made doors, give little suggestion of the beauties of color and craftsmanship those of the better class may contain. On either side of the streets, particularly in the bazaar quarter, are little

hole-in-the-wall shops, as though their owners had burrowed into the walls of the houses, and there, half hidden among their goods, cross-legged they squat, these merchants of the drowsy East, fanning flies and waiting for trade.

"Their wares stand out in brilliant display of burnished brass, copper trays, hanging lamps, silver-mounted ebony snuff-boxes, and flint-lock guns, handsomely-worked saddle bags, and leather money pouches heavily embroidered and of Kano dye. In the quiet shadows of long arcades, men pass noiselessly in slippered feet over carpets and rugs from Kairwan, Misurata, and the further East."

Night has settled over the town, and a wedding procession passes along the street below.

"Drifting over the housetops come wavering pulsations of sound. Then from some distant quarter they take form, and the wild beat of the tom-toms, strangely suggestive of the great elemental nature, heat, and passion of the drowsy and fanatical East, throbs its way nearer and nearer through the maze of dark and deserted streets. Now the long-sustained or rippling, resonant notes of the oboes and thrumming gimbrehs are discernible. 'Lu-lu-lu-lu!' ring out the shrill voices of women; clash go the steel cymbals, and a wedding procession turns into the Arbar-Arsat.

"A yelling runner on ahead passes under my window, then in irregular march the procession itself. First, bearers of lanterns of colored glass, which throw beautiful prismatic lights on the white-walled houses, and illumine the swarthy faces of the musicians who follow them; then more lanterns, diffusing the darkness, glinting in scintillating reflections from the men's eyes, and throwing great slashes of mellow light down upon the heads and shoulders of the muffled forms of the women. In their midst, seated on a donkey, rides the bride, hidden from view under a *palanquin* (canopy). Again follow lanterns illu-

minating the dark canopy, etching out the red gold threads of the heavy embroidery from its dark, velvety background.

"Just beyond my window the procession halts, wails a song, and moves on. Then the wild rhapsody of a desert people grows fainter; again only the tom-toms sound out in their barbaric prosody, and float away over the town and the desert sand. A scavenger dog sneaks by, and the city sleeps."

Then one is taken outside the walls of the city to the suks or markets, this one being where great bales of esparto, or half-grass, is auctioned off and shipped away for the manufacture of paper.

"Not ten minutes' trudge through the sand from the heavy battlements which surround Tripoli is the big square-walled enclosure of perhaps three acres—the Suk-el-Halfa. The scenes of this great suk have left an indelible impress on my memory. I but close my eyes and see that great panorama of the heat, the sweat, and the toil float across the horizon of my imagination like some mirage of that far-away desert land. . . .

" . . . My first impression was of a great sea of yellow-gray esparto bales, resembling a vast herd of half-submerged hippopotami; among them the cotton garments of the negroes flecked white, each dotted by the ebony head of its wearer, and over the glaring white walls which shut in the scene, the arches of some neighboring buildings seemed to peer like so many curious monster eyes."

In one of the many glimpses and incidents of caravan life a Bedaween caravan is described on the march.

"Passing caravans always excite curiosity. A dark mass appears on the horizon; it seems to disintegrate as it comes nearer, and one soon discerns the great, lumbering camels. It may be a big trade caravan, taking the greater part of the forenoon to pass, during which the caravaneers and your men exchange news; then it passes, its tag ends flapping in the wind,

for the fluttering rags of its caravaneers and the rents in the loads are the homeward-bound pennants of the northbound trans-Saharan caravans. Perhaps the dark spot proves to be a caravan of Bedawi, who, like the will-o'-the-wisps that they are, sweep by with all their barbaric paraphernalia. Some of the women are hidden from view by wide-spreading, gaudily-striped palanquins. At night they camp in a sunken spot where grow the spiny cacti and the withered camel thorn; by day-break on the morrow they are a speck on the horizon."

Toward the end of the volume one sees more of that ever-fascinating and mysterious waste of the Great Desert.

"The daily aspect of the Sahara is the reverse of that of our country, for in the desert the landscape is generally light against the sky, which in color so nearly complements the orange sand as to intensify greatly the contrast. When day breaks on the Sahara, the sun shoots long shafts of roseate light through the interstices of the palms; their dark red violet shadows wriggle and blend away over the gray-pinks and greens of the dew-wet sands. Soon the violet mists have turned to gold, and day has spread its brazen mantle on the sun-scorched desert. One feels the strange weirdness, the uncanny solitude, the oppressive heat and monotony which make the day's work a constant fight against fatigue, ennui, and sometimes sun madness. Watch the sun sink and the color of its light sift through space as through gems; there, where the blue sky lowers to the hot sand, it might have filtered through some green peridot of the Levant. Such are some of the aspects of the desert, whose charm places one under a spell which it is beyond the power of words to make real to the imagination of one who has never seen it."

The author culminates his story of the desert with perhaps one of the most artistic and descriptive paragraphs in his book.

"Night everywhere transforms the commonplace into the

realm of the beautiful, but night on the desert bewitches the imagination and allows all of the romance and vague fancy of one's nature to run riot. Go out after the dews have chilled the air, and stand alone on the moonlit billows; hold communion with those mighty impulses which seem to issue from its sands; sound the fathomless depths of that dark blue African sky, resplendent with its million glittering stars; let your eye wander on and on over the undulating hillocks, ever rolling away to the horizon of the imagination, until the mysterious spirits of the desert are rising dark and ghostlike out of the shades of the dunes. Then find your way back to your rug—spread, perchance, under the branches of some gnarled old olive tree—and fall asleep, to wander among the enchanted chambers of some Ali Baba, through the mysterious mazes of a thousand and one nights."

The Freezing Question

I don't care which one got there first,
Nor which "misrepresents" the worst,
Nor which employed most truthful guides,
Nor whose dogs had the longest strides;
Who grasped most scientific data,
Whose proof is coming now or later.
I wish they both had ne'er attained it,
Or simultaneously had gained it;
And then had stayed and fit it out,
Instead of coming home to pout.

* * * * * * *

Oh, let us hope their future goal
Will never be the Southern Pole!

K. M. S.

ART NEWS

There is an exhibition at the Copley Gallery of the work of several artists. Ipsen has the picture of his wife that was shown last year, and also a new canvas, a portrait of John Tetlow, master of the Girls' Latin School, which is interesting. There is a portrait of a child by Miss Chase, several landscapes by Mr. Baker, and four or five of Mr. Churchill's canvases, some of which were hung at the Twentieth Century Club two years ago. In one corner of the gallery are some miniatures by Miss Laura Hills, which were shown last year. To those of us who wield a "whitewash brush," they are nothing short of marvelous. In "The Fire Opal" are edible shades of pink, and the blue and green tapestry background of another is splendid, and yet delicate. The drawing and coloring of all are restrained, but they are alive with light and chiming color.

It seems too bad that the exhibitions cannot be in full swing now, when the journeying from one to another is in this bracing autumn weather, instead of later, when the joy of our eyes is marred by the damp, disagreeable feeling of our feet, and from the glory of the shows we are thrust into the ugliness of slush and our far-famed east wind.

There are several interesting articles in the current magazines. In Masters of Art is an account of Bastien-Lepage,—appreciative, but not blindly partisan. It comforts those of us who were not able, at the age of six, or thereabouts, to mould our mud-pies into wonderful likenesses of bird and beast. We are told that Bastien was not a particularly brilliant student, and that he could not construct from his imagination, but must have his model before him in flesh and blood. He was painstaking, and sincerity was his keynote. His portrait of Wolff occupied forty sittings. The artist declared to be necessary that which our instructors are demanding every day—concentration.

"Bastien himself said that concentration was the secret of good art."

In the International Studio for October, Elisabeth Luther Cary writes at length on John La Farge. There are several pages in the same magazine on the work of Frederick Wilson, with photographs of his stained glass windows.

In this issue of Scribner's Birge Harrison explains "The True Impressionism in Art." It is tersely and vividly written, and the reader feels on completing it as if he exactly understood the author's meaning and its application. The following quotations seem particularly fitted to students like us:—

"Give us, O Lord, to see, and we shall find the means of expression."

" . . . Students learn more from each other than they do from their masters. The constant attrition and stimulation, the wholesome emulation of the school, keep every mental fibre on the full jump, every nerve alive and tingling."

"He who attempts to improve on nature either lacks good judgment, or is endowed with a conceit so colossal that there is no health in him."

"Be reverent before nature and honest with yourself, and your art will ring true every time. All of you, . . . will not sing the song of the nightingale, because you were not all born nightingales. . . . Of all the songsters in creation, there is only one, I believe, whose lay is universally condemned—and that is the parrot."

Although all these magazine articles are "interesting and instuctive," they do not take the place of the exhibitions. Visual assimilation accomplishes more than all the hypotheses and explanations on "how to do it" will ever effect. If you've tried to do a certain thing and failed, and don't know why you've failed, go to the exhibitions and see how other people have succeeded. It is only the mean and inefficient who will ever become discour-

aged by the success of others. And Discouragement and Envy go hand in hand. Wasn't it Oliver Wendell Holmes who said, "Envy is the mean man's admiration"?

Therefore, we urge, as our predecessor in these columns has urged, that the students attend the many excellent exhibitions which will be held in this city during the coming winter.

Katharine M. Sawin.

The New Museum of Fine Arts

For the last year or two most of us have had a hazy sort of notion that there was to be a new museum some time or other, and the pile of granite slowly growing up there on Huntington avenue has been intimately connected with the idea. But this great pile of granite and all that it stands for has been growing in the minds of certain men ever since we were tiny tots in the primary schools, ingloriously stumbling over our "eight times table." The labor has been far greater than we can imagine.

In giving the credit due for this splendid addition to the city, we should in all fairness go back to the very beginning of the old Museum of Fine Arts, and take into account the efforts of the men who first made such an institution possible. It was through the influence of Denman Ross that the city gave the plot of land on Copley square for a museum building, with the condition, among others, that it should be open to the public at least once a week. The dedication took place July 3, 1876. The building at this time contained six pictures, four tapestries, two marbles, a few bronzes and prints,—the property of the museum,—and a loan collection. Martin Brimmer was the first president. Prominent in the new museum will be a portrait bust of Mr. Brimmer by August Saint-Gaudens. Other

noted directors were General Loring, William Endicott, and ex-President Eliot, of Harvard.

From the very first the museum received the interest and support of the public. Gifts and loans poured in, and inside of eleven years it was necessary to make extensive additions. These exhibits were mostly loans, since for twenty years the museum was too poor to purchase, but later it was enabled to buy treasures all over the world whenever they came on sale. The collections grew rapidly. The Chinese and Japanese collection is one of the two finest in the world. The Egyptian collection, presented by C. Granville Way in 1872, made from the first a conspicuous branch of the museum, and has since been materially increased.

Meanwhile the land around the museum had been built up. High buildings shut out the light and prevented the favorable exhibition of the art treasures. The classrooms were small and inaccessible, the danger from fire was great, and finally there was not enough room for exhibition purposes.

The experience of thirty years was brought to the making of the plans, and considerable literature on the subject was consulted. The counsel of authorities was sought. Buildings of a similar purpose were visited, both at home and abroad, and numerous experiments in lighting were tried in the old museum and in a temporary structure on the new site. The preliminary architectural work was intrusted to R. Clipston Sturgis and Edmund Wheelwright. The final plans were by Guy Lowell and Professor D. Despradelle.

Those who studied the plans when they were exhibited last winter will remember the ample provision that is made for enlargement, and also the increased opportunity for special study. For each collection is to be entirely separate from the others, and is to be as complete as possible in itself; a miniature museum, as it were, on that particular subject. Each de-

partment is to have a curator of its own, and a sort of sub-museum adjoining, which will contain more exhibits on the same subject stored upon shelves easily accessible to the student who wishes to study that one subject more carefully than the average visitor.

Eventually there will be a lecture hall seating 500 persons, and a special gallery for temporary exhibitions entirely apart from the permanent exhibits. The advantage of this will be readily seen. There will also be two enclosed inner courts, made beautiful with flowers and fountains, where two colossal equestrian statues, "Gattamelata" and "Colleonio," will be exhibited. These statues have been in the possession of the Art Museum since 1905, but have never been shown.

Special attention has been given to the lighting of the galleries of paintings. There are to be eight rooms in all, four lighted from the top, and four from the side. Each gallery is to be wider by some feet than the First Gallery of paintings in the old museum building.

The chief divisions of the main building are the Japanese department, the Egyptian, the Classical, the Paintings, and the Hall of Tapestries. All of these open from a beautiful rotunda at the head of a wide flight of stairs, and connect easily with each other. The library, also, is on this floor, while below are the administrative offices and auxiliary museums mentioned above. The casts are to be kept in a separate building, and the buildings of the school are also somewhat isolated.

The group of buildings, with their wide frontage of green lawn, will be in all probability the most beautiful in the city. There is little doubt that to us they will be the most interesting, and let us take due pride that at last Boston has an art museum well worthy to rank with the great modern museums of the world.

Frances Downes.

EDITORIALS

Poking your head up above the clouds is all very well, but see that you keep your feet upon the earth.

Once—when we were younger and more foolhardy—we asked an instructor how to succeed (as if an instructor or any one else could tell us).

"Go get a style!" he bawled at us. "I do not care what sort of style you have, but get one, and keep it."

All of which is very true, perhaps, but rather dangerous advice. You cannot "go get a style." You may acquire a taste for olives, or for Kipling, but you cannot acquire a style. Style is not the result of aping some one else; that is merely cleverness. Style is an expression of yourself—simpleness, naturalness. Style should be as a perfect window pane, a thing to look through, and the clearer, the more indiscernible, the less prominent, the better. Forget style, be yourself, do the thing as straightforwardly as you can, take the simplest, the most honest, the surest way to get the desired result; then by and by you will be surprised to find that you have a style, a style peculiarly your own. If you would do a thing as effectively as possible, and as becomingly to yourself, whether it be painting a picture or entering a ballroom, do it as simply and as unaffectedly as you can.

And now a word to the Freshmen. You are very fortunate to have so much ahead of you. Many of you will be

weeded out. Those of you who survive will have many, oh! so very many weary days, days when your ambitions and dreams will be as black and bitter as a frost-blighted vine. But remember, the darker the shadows, the brighter the highlights. Scorn fuzzy-wuzzy artisticness, fake Bohemianism, gilt and glitter as you would chrome yellow. They are alluring, cheap, damaging. Remember that pure art is as clean and clear as a running brook, and as grand, as simple, as unattackable as a Bible chapter. Remember that there is no easy way, no short cut, no luxurious royal road. "To give up never, to confess discouragement never, to do and keep doing, and struggling and battling against all obstacles; to die in the harness, poor and pushed aside, yet fighting to the last—this is the royal road. And to believe that it is the royal road, the only road worth living, and traveling, and dying in, is the God-given joy that makes it all worth while."

We expect and hope that this issue will be criticised. But we know what face value to put upon the criticism that has a sneer behind it; also, we know that critics usually have had no hand in the building. Now, if foundation, or wall, or ridge-pole is not of your making, and you happen to be going by and see a window out of plumb or a shutter hanging loose, do not stand in the road, and button-hole the first passer-by, and stick your thumb over your shoulder at the carpenter, climb over the fence and fix it. And we'll wager that you feel better as you go on down the road.

We want material, we are clamoring for material; not necessarily about art or about the Public School Class, but anything that is interesting, or that rings true to life, for life is art. And humor—show us something genuinely humorous, and

we will cling to it like leeches. But, remember, it must be good; if it isn't we'll tell you so frankly, and ask you to try again.

We, the staff, represent you, the school; we shape the clay that you give us. It is not our paper, it is your paper and ours. If you would only let us feel that there is an undercurrent of appreciation, of sympathy, of pride amongst you all, what a difference it would make!

Not so very long ago we stood on the deck of the old frigate Constitution at the Navy Yard. We had seen gray fighting monsters, sinister, powerful; we had marveled at the perfect breech-bolt mechanism of the guns—shining, whirring, clacking, steely things. The half-bare trees were black against a crimson sky. Suddenly, up from the distance was flung the blare of a bugle! Another chimed in, and another. Against the sky a flag was being lowered down the halyards, slowly, steadily, almost reverently. And somehow we were thrilled—with pride for our country. Don't you see? Don't you see?

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